

Docket 03-123

javeritt@swbell.net wrote on 9/17/2004 7:23:39 PM : ; Friday, September 17, 2004

The Honorable Federal Commission (FCC)

Dear Federal Commissioners, The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates the FCC to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing persons have access to functionally equivalent telecommunications services, through Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). One such form of TRS is Video Relay Service (VRS).; VRS is an Internet based service which allows deaf, hard of hearing and speech disabled persons to make telephone calls in their natural visual language - American Sign Language (ASL) -- by use of a high speed data line and either a video phone or a personal computer equipped with a video camera.; VRS is more functionally equivalent to the telephone service available to hearing persons because it allows for language inflection and non-verbal cues that are impossible to achieve through traditional text-based TRS.

More importantly, VRS allows a conversation to proceed at its natural speed, while text-based TRS conversations can take several times as long. This often leads hearing persons, especially businesses, to refuse relay calls or to hang up upon receiving a call. ; The FCC recognized VRS as a form of TRS as authorized by the ADA in 2000. However, recently, the FCC has shown what can at best be considered indifference to the service. Specifically, in June of 2003, the FCC cut the reimbursement rate for VRS upon 12 hours notice by more than 50 percent.; Prior to the rate cut, VRS was available 24 hours a day. Now it is not.; Prior to the rate cut, deaf and hard of hearing individuals were able to connect with an interpreter after a few seconds wait. Now wait time regularly exceeds a minute, sometimes as long as 20 minutes.

You would not tolerate such shabby service through voice telephony. Why should deaf and hard of hearing persons accept any less? Then in June of this year, the FCC cut the VRS payment rate again.; Officials at the FCC have attempted to blame the long wait times on the growing demand for VRS, not on its rate cuts. Perhaps that is a contributing factor, but it completely fails to explain why we no longer have 24 hours service available.

Moreover, the FCC has taken other recent steps that degrade VRS service. The FCC has ruled that VRS providers cannot provide ASL to Spanish translation on a VRS call. In addition, while the FCC requires that text-relay providers allow deaf persons to retrieve voice mail or messages from an answering machine, the FCC has yet to allow VRS providers to leave video voice mail messages for deaf persons. Thus, deaf and hard of hearing persons, as VRS users, have no way to receive a message via VRS which is functionally equivalent to the voice mail you can receive via your voice telephone service.; There are more than 28 million deaf and hard of hearing persons in the United States. While not all of us are fluent in American Sign Language and use VRS, the FCC's refusal to carry out its responsibilities under the ADA is unacceptable.; I am asking you to take action to ensure that the FCC to fulfill its responsibilities under the ADA to make functionally equivalent telecommunications service available to deaf, hard of hearing and speech disabled persons by adequately funding the service and authorizing Video mail service and ASL/Spanish translation. If the FCC refuses to do so, I am asking you to support legislation that would require the mandate of the ADA be fulfilled.

Sincerely, James Averitt
701 Scott St Apt 504
Little Rock, AR 72201
Email: javeritt@swbell.net

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03-123

VIA EMAIL TO THE FCC bloch@nad.org wrote on 9/15/2004 4:29:07 PM :

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

The Honorable Federal Commission (FCC)

Dear Federal Commission (FCC), The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates the FCC to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing persons have access to functionally equivalent telecommunications services, through Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). One such form of TRS is Video Relay Service (VRS).

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There are more than 28 million deaf and hard of hearing persons in the United States. While not all of us are fluent in American Sign Language and use VRS, the FCC's refusal to carry out its responsibilities under the ADA is a slap in the face of all deaf and hard of hearing persons.

I am asking you to take action to ensure that the FCC to fulfill its responsibilities under the ADA to make functionally equivalent telecommunications service available to deaf, hard of hearing and speech disabled persons by adequately funding the service and authorizing Video mail service and ASL/Spanish translation. If the FCC refuses to do so, I am asking you to support legislation what would require that the mandate of the ADA be fulfilled.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bloch

5820 Madaket Rd

Bethesda, MD 20816

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YOU WRITE VIA EMAIL TO THE FCC:

farb@nad.org wrote on 9/15/2004 9:20:30 AM :

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03-123

Wednesday, September 15, 2004
The Honorable Federal Commission (FCC)
Dear Federal Commission (FCC),
The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates the FCC to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing persons have access to functionally equivalent telecommunications services, through Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). One such form of TRS is Video Relay Service (VRS).

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Sincerely,

Anita Farb

5713 Newington Rd

Bethesda, MD 20816

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-----Original Message-----

03-123

From: Stacie Yates [mailto:stacie_yates@usa.net]

Sent: Tuesday, July 06, 2004 10:01 AM

To: Michael Powell; Kathleen Abernathy; Michael Copps; KJMWEB; Jonathan Adelstein

Subject: Relay operators and IP-Relay Operators

To whom it may concern,

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As a concerned citizen I am taking it upon myself to write you regarding a current regulatory restriction that allows criminal activity to be conducted through the use of relay operators. I have read several articles of late about the rules and regulations governing the operations of these individuals and am aware of the growing use of the system to conduct fraudulent business with American companies by foreign nationals, in particular. This abuse of the service is also pushing aside the deaf and hard of hearing callers who are trying to make legitimate calls.

My understanding of the current code suggests that if a criminal network were to use the network of relay operators to conduct business, that they could do so with little fear of being caught, because the discovery of these activities by the relay operator could not be reported by that individual without the operator risking job loss or legal action. That the laws in effect in this country could be circumvented in such a fashion is disturbing.

The Telecommunications Act regarding wire fraud appears to be voided by the restrictions on relay operators. Laws regarding organized crime, tax evasion, export restrictions, and, possibly, the Patriot Act, are made weaker due the hand-tying of a person who is in a position to alert authorities to the possibility of any number of criminal acts. When a relay operator is essentially forced by the law to be an unwilling accomplice in what they know to be a crime, scamming the person on the receiving end, it would seem to be a bad law. As it stands now, apparently the law expects an operator to do exactly that. A caller could be using the service to plan any criminal activity, from a petty credit card scam to a terrorist act, but the relay operator is expected to treat this caller the same as a legitimate caller trying to place a necessary call.

I would to like to urge your commission to consider amending the regulations and allowing relay operators to report suspicious activities to either the FCC, the US Treasury Department, or local law enforcement. Surely the same people currently trusted to help our citizens complete their daily business in an efficient and confidential manner can be trusted to use a bit of judgment in weeding out the deaf mother who is placing a call to her daughter for a catch-up conversation from a caller who inquires about twenty laptops that need to be shipped immediately to Lagos, Nigeria, insists that they be paid for via credit card, and express shipped. How frustrating it must be for these operators to be expected to relay these scams without a warning for the unsuspecting victim, and no recourse for reporting the activity to the authorities.

Stacie Yates

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Docket 03-123

-----Original Message-----

From: jane doe [mailto:johnjane21@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2004 5:45 PM

To: FCCINFO

Cc: Michael Powell

Subject: Internet Relay

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To Whom it May Concern:

I'm contacting you in regards to internet relay fraud, specifically Sprint Online Relay.

I work for a relay service called CSD it is relay for the deaf and hard of hearing. I am sure you are aware of the situation we are experiencing. However, I want to contact the FCC since that is the organization that regulates us. There has been for the past 8 months ongoing, nothing but fraud usage on this svc, I personally receive one maybe two actually "real" calls a day (calls made by deaf people). The rest are all fraud, most from foreign countries specifically Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, etc). It has gotten so bad that there have been numerous people quitting or getting fired because of these calls. My concern is of the millions of dollars that is stolen each week at our relay center alone. Not to mention the other centers that receive these calls. There are over 200 people that work at our relay center, and if you multiple all the calls each person receives in an 8 hour or more shift minus-ing only a few "real" calls, this is an immense amount of fraud going on.

At the place that we work for does not sympathize with any of us, they just tell us to process the calls as if they are "real calls." and if we don't like it to quit. That is easy for them to say. We feel that all this abuse of the relay system is extremely harmful in many ways. Not only does it make the relay service look scandalous, but we are defrauding millions of people, and their business not to count the actual credit card holders whose cards number are being stolen and abused. There has to be something that can be done. No one at our center in management seems to be working to solve this or at least sympathize with us, they are just firing people left and right and forcing them to quit, a job that many enjoyed before it became nothing but fraud 24/7. If there is any advice or info that you have or need. pls respond to this email .

Thanks in advance

john

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